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ABSTRACT

Renne (Oregon) Intermediate School offers an innovative program of personalized instruction to students in grades 6-8. Teachers work closely with individual students, following a continuous progress curriculum which allows cross-grade-level placement in the core areas of math, reading, and language arts. Based on cooperative district planning, the student body and instructional staff are organized into three inner schools called "Ranges," each consisting of students from all three grade levels and teachers from various subject area departments. In addition to the core curriculum, special mid-day activities (recreation, activities, and meals) supplement the curriculum. Teachers play an active role in the planning and development of school programs, teaching, leadership responsibilities, and professional training in assertive discipline. In summary, students in this personalized instruction program are afforded increased opportunities for success through the continuous progress curriculum, the integration of grade levels through Ranges, and the assertive discipline program. (LH)

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RENNE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL FEATURES PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

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Renne Intermediate School Features Personalized Instruction

Since the doors opened in 1980 at Renne Intermediate School in Newberg, Oregon, converting the district's junior high to a middle school, student achievement has increased, absenteeism and discipline problems have dropped and student and staff morale have sky rocketed. Housed in a high school building built in 1939, Renne provides an innovative program of personalized instruction to all 425 students in grades 6-8. Teachers work closely with individual students following a continuous progress curriculum which allows cross-grade-level placement in the core areas of math, reading and language arts.

Student achievement levels at Renne have increased significantly since the replacement of district junior high school programs with the middle school approach. Students are now achieving well above grade level and national norms in the core subjects. Incidents of discipline have declined, following the institution of a school-wide program of Assertive Discipline. Student attendance, formerly a problem at the junior high school, now averages 94.22 percent daily.

Elements of Renne's programs include:

- An internal organization into three "inner-schools" and a homeroom system within each inner-school involving all students and instructional staff.
- Continuous progress, cross-graded instruction in the core areas of reading, math and language arts.
- An assertive discipline approach including consistent application of school-wide and classroom rules for student behavior.
- Professional growth opportunities for teachers through monthly inservice sessions and teacher involvement in school programming development and curriculum review.
- Increased involvement of parents in school programs and activities.

Middle School Program Based on District Planning

Renne's program is based on philosophy, goals and recommendations formally adopted by the Newberg Board of Education in 1979 following a three-year study of middle school approaches. The Board, after determining to change from junior highs to middle schools in the district, established a Task Force to investigate middle school structures and recommend a specific approach for Newberg middle schools.

In 1979, closely following Task Force recommendations, the Board adopted three major goals for the projected district middle schools:

1. To maintain a small school/elementary atmosphere.
2. To provide an opportunity for each student to develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially.
3. To develop a student-parent centered school.

The district's intermediate schools would replace the content-centered approach of the departmentalized junior high schools with a student-centered approach to learning.

To achieve district middle school goals, the Board called specifically for the establishment of inner-schools within each intermediate school, for the use of individualized approaches to instruction that would not be interrupted by changes in grade level and for emphasis on reading, math and language arts within a wider curriculum.

Board direction was followed closely in the preparation for the opening of the District's two middle schools in 1980. One new middle school was built to provide facilities for the inner-school approach, and Renne Junior High was converted to Renne Intermediate School.

Inner-Schools Major Innovation

Renne is housed in a traditional high school building completed in 1939 and used previously as a high school and junior high school. Unlike the new middle school, the building does not include many features designed to complement the middle school program. However, Principal Judith Wayland and her dedicated staff have successfully implemented Renne's programs so they now conduct a "1983 educational program in a 1939 building."

"Pride in Excellence" is the motto at Renne Intermediate School in Newberg, Oregon.

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In order to provide a school setting in which students and teachers individually interact, the Renne student body and instructional staff are organized into three inner-schools called "Ranges" and named for three Oregon mountain ranges. Each Range includes students from all three grade levels and teachers from various subject area departments. Each student, upon entering the school, is assigned to a Range and remains in that Range throughout the three years at Renne.

Within the Ranges, students receive assignments to homerooms, which also remain the same while the students are at Renne. Grade levels are mixed in homerooms, and students get to know small groups of students which include those from other grades. The Ranges and homerooms also provide the opportunity for students to learn to know at least one faculty member well while at Renne.

Students have a strong sense of belonging to and pride in the school as a whole, and proudly identify themselves as Renne "Rams." Orientation programs immediately involve newcomers in Renne activities. New students are quickly involved in school programs and Range activities by "Rangers," students from each Range who help newcomers and provide tours for visiting adults.

The Ranges serve as a school-wide organizers for both academic and supplementary activities. For example, Ranges compete in school activities and events, such as fund-raising to supplement reduced school budget monies. Social events are planned for the Ranges during the year to include students, parents and teachers.

Core Curriculum Uses Continuous Progress

The Renne core curriculum of reading, math and language arts is based on continuous progress instruction and evaluation, permitting each student to move through sequential learning activities at a personal rate. Based on pre-testing, students are placed according to skill level when they enter the school, and testing continues annually as they move through the three grades. Cross-grading placement is common in the core areas, and students who advance quickly can be scheduled into more advanced levels at times other than the beginning of the school year or quarter.

Requirements for all students include three years each of language arts and math, and 2½ years each of social studies and science. The curriculum also includes music, art, physical education and an exploratory program called DASH (Discovering Art, Shop and Home Economics) that is required for all sixth graders and available as an elective for students in grades 7 and 8. The DASH program is designed to help students develop skills toward occupational versatility.

Student progress is carefully monitored by teachers, and homeroom teachers serve as advisors to students and liaisons to parents and other teachers in the school. Progress is reported to parents through quarterly grade report cards and mid-term progress reports each quarter. An "Academic/Attendance Report" is used when appropriate, both to commend students or to inform parents of unsatisfactory progress and/or incomplete work. Daily progress reports which require a parent signature each evening are also used with some students to closely monitor their progress.

Special Mid-Day Activities Supplement Curriculum

Mid-day in the seven-period day, special activities are arranged for students to supplement the structured academic classes. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday each week, students are involved in "R.A.M. Time," a 70-minute period that includes recreation, activities and meals.

R.A.M. Time is organized by Range. Students in each Range homeroom choose specific activities in six-week R.A.M. Time rotations. Activities are organized to reflect student interests, and each rotation usually includes 7 - 8 options within each Range. During each rotation, Ranges provide options for physical activities (bicycling, roller skating), for quiet individual work (candle making, other crafts) or a supervised study hall outside the homeroom. Academic R.A.M. Time options are also offered, such as Conversational French, Sign Language and a course in Rocketry. All R.A.M. activities are supervised by Range teachers, and R.A.M. Time each day includes a short period in the homeroom, lunch and one R.A.M. activity for each student.

Special activities are also scheduled the other two mid-day periods. Tuesday at mid-day, students have lunch and are involved in a homeroom activity called "Share Time" in which the homeroom teacher leads students through group activities such as problem-solving and "get-acquainted" exercises and other interactive sessions. These activities are designed to focus on non-academic personal skills and to increase the students' sense of belonging and importance within the school. In the 1983-84 school year, homeroom teachers will follow a "Share Time" curriculum developed by Renne teachers during the summer.

The Thursday mid-day period is set aside for study hall in Range homerooms either preceding or following lunch. Students quietly pursue individual tasks in the familiar setting, a procedure particularly useful to students who have full schedules of outside activities. Study hall was instituted following suggestions from parents and staff that a weekly in-school study time would be useful in helping students keep up with school assignments.

Staff Involvement High

Teachers at Renne play an active role in the planning and development of school programs, in addition to their teaching in at least two subject areas and their duties as homeroom advisors. As part of the shared decision making approach adopted by Principal Wayland, teachers within each Range meet weekly to discuss Range school programs and students and activities in their Range, continually working to increase learning opportunities for Range students.

Teachers in each Range elect a Range Representative who serves on the Renne Action Council, an advisory committee organized by the principal. Also serving on the Action Council are Resource Teachers representing each subject area department, a DASH representative, the Athletic Director and the school's R.A.M. Coordinator. This group provides recommendations to the Principal for problem solving, new curriculum focus or staff development programs. Through these activities and/or involvement in the school's many staff committees, all teachers have leadership responsibilities beyond the classroom.

Staff also play an important role in the annual internal review and revision of the school's Curriculum Guide. Subject area teachers meet to review all levels and courses in their area. Changes or suggestions are then presented by the area Resource Teacher to the Renne Action Council and are finally presented to the district Curriculum Steering Committee for final approval and action.

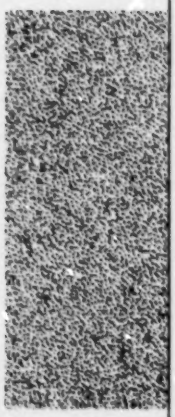
Professional development for Renne teachers is a high priority. Monthly staff development sessions are held for all teachers. For the last two years, these sessions have been focused on the Learning Styles program, helping teachers to develop ways to take advantage of Learning Styles inventories available on all Renne students. The Learning Styles approach has been successful in providing the teachers with information to use in individualizing instruction for students with varying styles of learning.

Individual staff development is made possible through a cyclical "Performance Appraisal System" for teachers, including goal-setting, pre- and post-conferencing during the year and spring assessment conferences for individual teachers to determine progress in meeting goals. Staff receive oral and written feedback after each formal observation and, if needed, "Plans of Assistance" are developed with teachers to identify areas where they can improve and ways to help them do so.

CURRICULUM GUIDE

RENNE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

1983–1984



Teachers and administrators work together to make recommendations for the annual revision of Renne's *Curriculum Guide*.

Discipline Program a Success

One area of staff development has had broad effect on the entire school population: the staff training in and school-wide adoption of an "Assertive Discipline" program. Underlying the program is a school philosophy about school conduct and classroom rules/discipline published in the Student-Parent Handbook distributed to all students each year:

All students who attend Renne have the right to learn and participate in all aspects of the school program in a secure learning atmosphere, safe from disruptive behavior or harm from other students. Therefore:

1. ***No student has the right to stop a teacher from teaching.***
2. ***No student has the right to interfere with another's learning.***
3. ***No student has the right to act in a manner that is contrary to his/her best interests.***

Complementing the school-wide rules are five basic classroom rules, posted in all classrooms and clearly stated to all students:

1. ***Follow directions.***
2. ***Be in your assigned place when the bell rings.***
3. ***In classroom discussions, raise your hand and wait to be called.***
4. ***Respect the rights and property of others.***
5. ***No "put downs."***

There is a high emphasis on positive student behavior at Renne, with appropriate rewards given to students who behave in an exemplary manner. Teachers and administrators follow a uniform plan for dealing with students who do get into difficulty.

The program has significantly reduced discipline problems at Renne. Consistency in the following and enforcement of school rules has helped students develop self-discipline and good citizenship. Attendance has increased to the current high rate of 94.22% daily, vandalism has been virtually eliminated, and students feel better about themselves and the school.

"Renne Pride" Motto for Students, Parents and Teachers

With increased opportunities for success through the continuous progress curriculum, the integration of grade levels through the Ranges, and the assertive discipline program, students are now very proud of their school. Several school improvement projects have contributed to student pride in the school. The school's courtyard was relandscaped according to a parent volunteer's plans, with the students doing the actual digging and planting. The halls and walls of the old building have been covered with colorful murals and graphics in a project planned by the school art teacher and carried out by over 400 students over the past four years. Changes in the appearance of the school for which students are themselves responsible have instilled pride and "ownership" in the school.

Parents are proud of Renne, as well. Parents have become more actively involved in school activities, primarily due to Renne's outreach programs to include them. Parents have been recruited for the growing Renne Parent Club, and many serve as volunteers in classrooms and at athletic and social events. There is also a Parent Advisory Council which meets regularly to make recommendations about school policies and programs. In addition, communications between the school and the community have been improved, notably through the annual distribution of a Student-Parent Handbook outlining school programs, activities and policies.

The school motto is "Pride in Excellence," and this attitude is reinforced throughout the school community. Involved parents, interested and high-achieving students and committed, caring teachers work together to make Renne a good place for students to learn. This year, Renne Intermediate School was one of eight Oregon schools named as an unusually successful secondary school in the "Excellence in Education" program by President Reagan and U.S. Secretary of Education Terrell Bell. This award gave national recognition to the hard working, dedicated staff members and their enthusiastic principal. Renne is a successful, vital middle school established in an old high school building: it is a place where everyone is involved in and enjoys the experience of learning.

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